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# MURFREESBORO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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RUTHERFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PUBLICATION NO. 32

Published by the

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# ARTICLES

1. A Researcher's Guide to Rutherford County Records      page 1  
    by David L. Rowe
2. "Jerry Sneak" by Homer Pittard      page 84  
    (discovered among his papers after his death)



A RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO RUTHERFORD COUNTY RECORDS

by

David L. Rowe  
Compiler and Editor

for the  
Murfreesboro Heritage Committee  
Homecoming '86

Published by  
The Rutherford County Historical Society  
Winter 1989



## Foreword

Ever since Alex Haley published Roots and a film version of the book appeared on television, Americans in the thousands have gone treasure hunting, searching in public records for clues to the lives of their ancestors. Dozens of geneological guides and "how to do it" books have appeared, all of them more or less helpful to the nonprofessional historian who has to learn from scratch about censuses, wills, vital statistics--where to find them and how to use them. All of these publications reach out to a general audience to assure wide sales to cover printing costs, so they necessarily discuss generally available resources in general terms.

It has long been obvious that a different kind of publication was necessary to complement these guides--a book that discusses specific records available in a specific community, where they are located, what information they contain, how to get that information, and how to interpret it. To make such a book readily available requires a publisher who can present it to an audience limited in number and geography and one who can present it in a less formal format affordable to the general public. In other words, the key to a successful guide to the records of a particular locality is a partnership between historians who know about and have used these records and the local historical





society which can make this information available.

Such a partnership is already an old one here in Murfreesboro. Local historians have for decades been researching the story of families, events, and institutions of the city, and the Rutherford County Historical Society has a long- and well-established series of publications that distributes this history to the public. It is to celebrate this partnership as well as to serve the public interest, therefore, that this guide to local records is presented.

Any time is propitious for compiling a document like this, but Tennessee Homecoming '86 provided the incentive for beginning and completing this project. What the longterm benefits and effects of Homecoming '86 will be is unclear, but Murfreesboro's Heritage Committee began its work determined to produce a lasting contribution, a gift to the people of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County that would exist possibly long after the reasons for Homecoming '86 are forgotten. The best gift we could give was shared knowledge. So in this spirit we present this guide to the Rutherford County Historical Society and, through them, to you.



## Table of Contents

I. Foreword.....	page 1
2. How to Use County Records for Research....	page 4
3. Recording Information.....	page 9
4. Personal Information.....	page 13
5. Property Information	
A. Conveyances.....	page 23
B. Taxes.....	page 38
C. Wills and Estates.....	page 41
6. Business Information.....	page 55
7. Legal Information	
A. Chancery Court.....	page 60
B. Circuit Court.....	page 66
C. County Judge and County Court.....	page 72
D. General Sessions Court.....	page 76
8. Administrative Information.....	page 78
9. Materials in Linebaugh Library.....	page 83



## How to Use County Records for Research

Anyone researching information in county records for the first time feels lost. There are hundreds of records produced by a dozen agencies and stored in any number of locations. Just finding a particular record seems difficult enough, let alone finding the information in that record that we are seeking. In reality, though, researching in county records is easier than other kinds of historical research, for the materials are together in one community (although perhaps in more than one building) rather than spread all over the country. And finding information in those records is easy, too, once one becomes accustomed to two things. First is the structure of local government. Once we know that, then finding specific records is simply a matter of deducing which agency would have created it. Second is the specific method by which agencies wrote information. From one record to another, and from one agency to another, there is a decided consistency in the kinds of information recorded and in the manner of recording it. Let's look at each of these considerations in turn.

### The Structure of Local Government

Each county agency has defined functions, and each has generated records in fulfilling those functions since the



establishment of Rutherford County in 1803. Both the structure of the county government and the kinds of records generated derived from traditional American and British models, and although county government and the records it keeps have increased in size and complexity over the years, the outlines of that model are still clearly recognizable.

American county government derives from British county administration, the most important unit of local government in England. (Louisiana, the only American exception, derives its local parish form of government from the French model.) The form of English county administration evolved over centuries with influences from the Anglo-Saxons before the Norman Conquest in 1066 and then from the French afterwards. For instance, the chief Saxon administrator (reeve) for the county (shire) was known as the shire reeve, a word that evolved into sheriff; the chancery (from the Old French chancelerie) was the court that heard cases involving equity, and from this has evolved our Chancery Court; the local judicial official in Britain and in the North American colonies was the justice of the peace. There were other forms of local government in Britain as well--incorporated cities, boroughs, ports--and it was from these "inferior" municipalities that northern colonies in North America derived their township and borough governments. In the southern colonies, though, population was distributed so thinly that





larger geographic areas, counties, became the most important units of local government, and this tradition carried on when settlers principally from North Carolina and Virginia populated the interior of their colonies, the areas that became Kentucky and Tennessee.

The functions of county government in America remained much the same as well--essentially to maintain order and to raise money for public purposes. Along with these two functions have always gone the two kinds of power needed to execute them, the power of the sword (military and police) and the power of the purse (taxing). All county government essentially derives from these two functions and powers. Exercising these powers falls to the three structural branches of government--legislative, executive, and judicial. It is in this structure that the greatest evolution of local administration has taken place.

The county legislature evolved from what was originally a regional meeting of Justices of the Peace. These officials were responsible for maintaining the peace and so were directly associated with the local militia. Each captain's company had two justices, whom the legislature appointed. Eventually the office became elective. All the county's Justices of the Peace met four times a year in the Quarterly Court whose functions were administrative (recording deeds, bonds, licenses), judicial (probating wills, establishing guardianships and trusteeships),



and legislative (levying taxes). Eventually the administrative duties fell to a monthly meeting of the Court called the Quorum Session. The Clerk of the Court became the chief registrar of the county and the County Judge its chief executive. In 1978 county government was reorganized, and the County Court replaced with the County Board of Commissioners.

Several officers serve the county's legislature in specific ways. The Register of Deeds records deeds and other official instruments; the Superintendent of Schools administers the public school system; the Highway Superintendent supervises road work and the county workhouse; the Director of Accounts and Budgets maintains proper financial records; the County Health Director administers public health projects and keeps vital statistics; a Planning Director and Building Inspector administers zoning and health and safety codes in the construction and renovation of buildings; the Register-at-Large runs the county Election Commission office. Many of these officers work with appointed or elected commissions.

Until 1978 the chief executive official of the county was the County Judge, principally an administrative rather than judicial officer. Today, the chief county administrator is the County Executive. Enforcing laws has fallen to a series of officials over time. The Sheriff is the chief county law enforcement agent, the Coroner inspects causes of death, the



County Attorney advises the local government in legal matters. In the past the Constables served warrants and the Ranger rounded up stray and unmarked animals. The chief fiscal officer is the County Trustee who collects taxes and disburses county money. Associated with him is the Assessor of Property. Challenges of assessments go directly to a Board of Equalization.

Judicial functions fall to a series of courts. Tennessee's system of local courts is one of the most complicated in the nation, made more so by the unclear lines of jurisdiction among them and by jurisdiction that often overlaps that of state courts. In general, however, cases involving local law are heard in one of three courts. The Court of General Sessions sets bail and bond and gives judgments in minor civil and some criminal cases. The Chancery Court (over which presides an elected Chancellor) hears all civil cases involving adoptions, divorces, child support and custody, delinquent taxes, guardianships and trusts, bankruptcies, and forced sales. The Chancery Court also administers naturalization proceedings locally. The court's clerk is called the Clerk and Master. The Circuit Court hears criminal and civil cases (involving more than \$10,000). All cases involving juveniles are referred to the Juvenile Court which used to operate under the County Judge but that today is served by an elected judge. The District Attorney General is the county's prosecutor.



### Recording Information

The records of all these agencies contain information that can be helpful to us whether we are tracing our lineage, discovering the history of our house, researching the evolution of an institution such as a church, business, or civic club, or learning about a local historical event. Once we become familiar with the structure of local government, the next step in finding this information is to ask ourselves what KIND of information we are seeking.

A specific record contains the information required for the agency to fulfill its mandated responsibilities, so to find a particular kind of information we need to determine which agencies would have maintained the kind of information we need. For instance, if we want facts about school attendance in Rutherford County we would logically look at records of the Department of Education; if we wanted a list of registered voters we would look at the Election Commission's records; if we wanted to find the minutes of a trial we would look at the minutes of the appropriate court. But there is a great deal of unexpected information in these records as well. For instance, the list of registered voters also indicates each voter's occupation, perhaps a handy fact to have; a church deed lists the members of the vestry or building committee at the time the congregation





purchased the land; executors' reports list an estate's creditors which provides clues to how a specific person lived.

The purpose of this guide is to awaken the researcher to these hidden treasures. It may well be that a genealogist who has lost track of an ancestor in traditional sources will find that person in a court action, listed as a jury member, or claiming tax exemption for delivering fox scalps to the county. To do that, we must organize our material in the most helpful manner, not according to the agency that created each record but according to the principal kind of information each record conveys. Each county record conveys information of one of five kinds:

1. PERSONAL INFORMATION (vital statistics): facts about individuals' birth, marriage, death, naturalization, adoption, guardianship;

2. PROPERTY INFORMATION: facts about the ownership, conveyance, and improvement of property;

3. BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION: facts about how individuals made a living and functioned in commerce;

4. LEGAL INFORMATION: facts about personal conduct, trials, civil suits, serving on juries;

5. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION: facts about how county government functions and who administers the agencies of county government.



Of course, these five categories overlap. A jury trial (LEGAL INFORMATION) also conveys facts about persons' lives (PERSONAL INFORMATION), as does a merchant's bond (BUSINESS INFORMATION), or a will (PROPERTY INFORMATION). What we are doing is assessing the principal kind of information a record conveys and organizing this guide accordingly. The researcher who wants to find out absolutely everything about "John Smith" should consult all the records; someone wishing only to find information about a civil suit involving "John Smith" needs consult only the section on LEGAL INFORMATION.

For every record included in each of these five categories the reader will also find listed the agency that created the record and the years each record covers. This guide also tells where the record is located. Most appear in the County Archives, on the second floor of the Court House, or in the office of the agency that created the record. The Tennessee State Library and Archives (listed as TSL&A) has microfilmed many of these records, and complete sets of these microfilms are available at the State Library. Linebaugh Library received 100 reels of this collection and purchased an additional 6 reels. Each county agency has copies of the microfilm of records that agency created and/or maintains. Also, Middle Tennessee State University has purchased some rolls of microfilm from the large set of Rutherford County records. Each record description lists all locations where the



record may be found and used. This guide also describes the record's index (if it has one) and how to use it. Finally, a description of each record states what kinds of specific information the record conveys. At the end of this guide you will find a cross-referenced index by subject matter which will indicate which records to use to find specific kinds of information.

Now with patience and imagination mining facts out of this body of material becomes principally a matter of work. Like any detective the researcher will find dead ends, but there is no greater satisfaction than after long hours of searching finding just the information we are seeking tucked away in a dusty ledger. Have fun!



## PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Record: Birth Records (County Court Clerk), 1881-1937  
Location: 1881-1912, 1915-1937--County Clerk's Office  
1924-1936--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1881-1912; 1915-1935--at TSL&A, County Clerk

Birth records contain the name, sex, and race of the newborn, the place of birth by civil district number or ward, the names of the parents and their places of birth, the name of the physician, the father's occupation, and the date the birth was recorded. An index appears in the front of the record books for 1881-1912 and 1925-1937, listing alphabetically the names of the newborn children and the page number on which the birth is recorded. Records for 1924-1936 are not indexed. Currently, the Department of Health maintains birth records, but all records for the last fifty years are kept confidential.

2. Record: Death Records (County Court Clerk), 1881-1937  
Location: 1881-1912, 1925-1937--County Clerk's Office  
1924-1936--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1881-1912--at TSL&A, County Clerk

Death records contain the name, age at death, race, and sex of the deceased along with his or her marital status (in some record books only). One also finds here the deceased's place of birth





including the civil district number if born in Rutherford County, the place of death by civil district number, and the date and cause of death. Books are arranged alphabetically, but within each book names are not arranged in alphabetical order. The record of "John Smith's" death would appear in the book marked "S", but within that book the clerk would have written in the record of his death chronologically. To find it, simply keep looking; or if you know the year he died then turn pages until you come to records of death for that year, and his record will be there.

3. Record: Discharges [Military] (Register of Deeds),  
1919-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office  
Microfilm: 1919-1958 (1937 missing)--at TSL&A, Register's  
Office

All honorable discharges from the armed services from World War I through today are listed here. The information each record contains varies over time, and in general the amount of information decreased over time. But in 1919 a discharged listed the soldier's name, serial number, rank at time of discharge, company, regiment, branch of the military, the reason for the discharge, birth place, age at enlistment, occupation, the color of his or her eyes and hair, complexion, height, place and date of discharge, and the signature of the commanding officer. Early



discharges also contain an enlistment record including notes on the soldier's marksmanship, horse- manship, battles and decorations received, wounds, physical condition at the time of discharge, marital status, and remarks about his or her personal character.

4. Record: Enumeration (Department of Education), 1912-1913  
Location: County Archives

This is a ;edger containing statistics on school population in each school district. It contains the name of the school, the district number, name of the parent or guardian, name and address of the student, his or her distance from school as well as race, physical condition, and age, the total school enrollment, and the number of students who can read and write. There is no general index to this register; names appear by district number. To find a specific person one would have to read through the record.

5. Record: Fox Scalp Exemptions (County Trustee), 1879-1889  
Locaiton: County Archives

The state authorized a tax deduction, or exemption, for anyone producing fox scalps to encourage the limitation of the fox population which had either grown too large or too susceptible to rabies. This document records those people in Rutherford County



who claimed such a tax exemption. It lists the name of the applicant and the number of scalps presented. An alphabetical index by last name of the applicant appears at the front of the book giving the page number on which the exemption appears, but names do not appear alphabetically under each letter division. "John Smith" would appear in the index on the "S" page, but his name might be listed after "John South," for instance.

- 6. Record: Guardian Settlements (County Court Clerk),  
1914-present
- Location: 1914--County Archives  
1940-present--County Clerk's Office  
Settlements prior to this date appear in the  
County Court Minute Books
- Microfilm: 1940-1963--at TSL&A, County Clerk

This records the establishment of guardians and the reasons for doing this. It contains the name of the guardian and of the dependent, the reason for the establishment of the guardianship (minority, incompetence, retardation, etc.), the source of the money for the dependent, the purpose and amount of money spent, and the guardian's salary. A financial record lists all receipts and disbursements in the dependent's account. Yearly reports often list the release of the guardianship and its reason. If the dependent has died then funeral expenses are listed. Volumes appear chronologically, and at the front of each is an alphabetical listing by last name of the dependent showing also



the reason for the establishment of the guardianship and the page number on which the settlement may be found.

7. Record: Guardian Bonds (County Court Clerk), 1874-present  
 Location: 1874-1973--County Archives  
 1948-present--County Clerk's Office  
 Microfilm: 1848-present--TSL&A, County Clerk  
 1877-1948--Linebaugh Library

This is a listing of bonds filed by guardians to ensure faithful administration of his or her responsibilities. The record includes the names of the guardian and the dependent, date of the bond, status of dependent (minor, retarded, incompetent, etc.), the guardian's oath, the clerk's name, and the court term and date. Sometimes also a power of attorney appears taped onto the page. At the front of each volume appears an alphabetical index by last name of the dependent, though names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division ("Smith" may follow "South," for example). The index lists the page number of the oath, and sometimes the name of the guardian.

8. Record: Guardian Minute Book (County Court Clerk),  
 1874-1910  
 Location: County Clerk's Office  
 Microfilm: 1874-1910--TSL&A, County Clerk, Linebaugh Library

This is an index to the location of guardian settlements





contained in the County Court Minute Books where they were recorded before 1914, giving the book and page number. The index is arranged chronologically and gives the name of the guardian and the dependent and the location of all references to the guardianship. At the front of the book is an alphabetical index of this index arranged by last name of the guardian and the dependent.

9. Record: Guardian's Receipts (County Court Clerk),  
1855-1914  
Location: 1954-1914--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1855-1914--at TSL&A, County Clerk

The record lists receipts in each account for the dependent and provides the names of the guardian and of the dependent, and the amount received for the dependent. Some pages have powers of attorney attached.

10. Record: Marriages (County Court Clerk), 1804-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: Index, 1899-1914; 1804-1963--at TSL&A, County Clerk  
Index, 1899-1914; 1804-1907--at Linebaugh Library  
1804-1881--at MTSU

Listings of marriage licenses and actual marriages providing the names of the bride and groom, date of the license, date of the wedding, and the names of any sureties. Each book contains an



alphabetical listing at the front of grooms and brides (some books only list the grooms), but within each letter category names do not appear in strict alphabetical order. There is also a separate "Index to Marriages" from 1804-1881.

11. Record: Marriage Licenses (County Court Clerk), 1902-1909  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1902-1904--at TSL&A, County Clerk

A listing of marriage licenses arranged chronologically and providing the name of the groom and the bride and the date of the license. This is not indexed.

12. Record: Motor Vehicle Registration (County Court Clerk),  
1930-1939  
Location: County Archives

This record lists motor vehicle licenses providing the name of the licensee, his or her address, and the registration number. The record is not indexed. Entries appear in chronological order.

13. Record: Naturalization Record (Circuit Court), 1924  
Location: County Archives

This record provides a wealth of information about each person



naturalized in Rutherford County in 1924 including a certificate of arrival, port of entry into the United States, date the certificate was issued, name of the alien, date of arrival, name of vessel or steamship line, declaration of intention to become a citizen. This latter lists the state and city where the intention was filed, name of the alien, birth place, age, country of origin, date of arrival, name of previous head of state, intention to renounce previous allegiance, signatures of the alien and the clerk. It is truly unfortunate that records for additional years are not available.

14. Record: Power of Attorney (County Court Clerk),  
1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office  
Microfilm: 1804-1814--at TSL&A, County Clerk

Powers of attorney are included with Trust Deeds (see the next section, "Property," to learn how to find specific documents). These documents convey agent status for another person allowing the holder to sign documents, give receipts, make sales, and collect and disburse funds in the interests of the dependent. Documents record the name of the appointee, name of the dependent, date of the appointment, notarization, and signature of the clerk.



15. Record: Power of Attorney [Receipts] (County Court Clerk), 1854-1914  
Location: County Archives

This is a set of receipts recording activities by those holding power of attorney for another.

16. Record: Registered Voters (Election Commission), 1938, 1941-42, 1947  
Location: County Archives

These volumes contain lists of registered voters for the 13th civil district (Murfreesboro) providing the name, sex, age, address, and vocation. Two volumes are separate listings of "Colored Voters" and provide the name, address, age, and vocation. Volumes of white voters are arranged alphabetically by last, though names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division. "Colored Voters" lists, containing about 260 names in each volume, list names in no particular order and are not indexed. All volumes are annual listings.

17. Record: Insanity Record (County Court Clerk), 1919-1975  
Location: County Clerk's Office Microfilm: 1919-1964--at TSL&A, County Clerk

These volumes contain commitment papers and record of proceedings listing the name of the hospital to which the patient is committed, name of the patient, nature of the process by which





he or she was committed, a physician's report, description of the patient, nature of the illness, and a description of the patient's behavior pattern.



## PROPERTY INFORMATION

## A. Conveyance

18. Record: Deeds (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office  
Microfilm: Indexes; 1804-1963--TSL&A, Register's Office  
Indexes; 1804-1902--Linebaugh Library  
Indexes, 1804-1890; 1804-1838, 1864-1879--MTSU

Deeds are records of transactions between people, often involving property, and they are the most voluminous records the county maintains. There are several types of deeds. The best known is the deed of conveyance, the document that records the purchase of your home and property and the conveyance of fee simple title to you, but there are also deeds of trust, deeds of easement, and others. Each record, though, contains a great deal of information that can be of help to the researcher, so we will discuss this particular record at length.

Finding the Correct Deed: All deed transactions involve a grantor (seller or lender) and a grantee (purchaser or debtor). A person who buys land or takes out a loan today is a grantee, but tomorrow when he or she sells the land or loans money the person becomes a grantor. Every piece of land in Rutherford County has a record of purchase and sale extending back in time to the earliest settlement periods, and assuming that all land



transactions have been recorded (which often is not the case), then the record of the land's ownership appears in the deeds. This is true of mortgages, too, which appear in the deeds of trust.

Establishing the chain of ownership of a specific parcel of land is not difficult. Begin with the current owner. If you do not know who that is go to the Tax Assessor's office and refer to the plat maps of the county. Each property has a tax map number, and the Assessor's Office maintains a card file arranged by property number that lists the current owner of record and also the deed book number and page number on which appears the most recent deed of conveyance. Tracing the ownership back through time now becomes a matter of identifying previous owners.

All deeds that are recorded appear in two indexes, each of them divided into chronological periods. The Direct Index lists each deed according to the last name of the seller (grantor); the Indirect or Reverse Index lists each deed according to the last name of the purchaser (grantee). Each deed appears in each index. If John Smith now owns the parcel of land you are researching and you locate the current deed, you will find him listed as the grantee. This deed will give you the name of the grantor, the person from whom he bought the land. Let's say that person was "Sam Jones". While Sam Jones was the grantor in this transaction, at some time in the past he was the grantee; he



bought the land from someone else. Your next step is to refer to the most recent Reverse Index (1955-present), I-J, to find the deed that first conveyed title to the property to Sam Jones. On the inside cover appears the alphabetical system by which names are arranged in the index. In this volume the system looks like this:

	I	1		Jp	Jv	
				Jq	Jw	
Ja	Jb		Jo	Jr	Jx	7
	Jc	3		Js	Jy	
	Jd			Jt	Jz	
	Jf		Ji	Jj		
Je	Jg			Jk	5	
	Jh			Jl		
				Jm		
				Jn		

All last names beginning with the letter "I" are indexed beginning at section 1 (technically this is a page number, but these "pages" go on for many sheets). The name "Jones" begins with the letters "J" and "o" and those names are indexed in section 7. When we turn to that section we will find all the names beginning with the letters "Jo" through "Jz". Here one finds the last name of the grantor appearing in the left hand column and then a series of columns divided alphabetically in which first names are recorded. To find our person we need to look at all the "Joneses" and then check to see that we have "Sam" Jones. People who do alot of abstracting of deeds often





find it actually easier to look for the first name rather than for the last name, because that automatically disqualifies most of the names included in this part of the index. There are fewer "Sams" than there are Joneses or other names beginning with Jo through Jz. You will notice that these names DO NOT appear in strict alphabetical order; in fact, they are listed in chronological order according to the date the deeds were recorded. So you must search through the pages until you find Sam Jones's name.

Next, you must be sure that the deed listed in this index is for the same piece of property in which you are interested. Sam Jones may have purchased more than one parcel in the time period the index covers. The only way to be sure is to look at all the deeds recorded for Sam Jones. (If you know the date when he sold this land the job becomes somewhat easier, but in most cases you won't know this.) Also, there may well have been more than one Sam Jones buying property--Sam Jones, sr.; Sam Jones, jr.; Sam Jones from Murfreesboro; Sam Jones from Eagleville. They're not the same person, and you'll have to note all references to "Sam Jones" to make sure you get the correct deed. You will notice that the index itself lists the grantor along with the grantee, so if you know you have the correct person and the correct piece of property you will not have to refer to the deed to get the name of the grantor.



If you need to check this, and it's a good idea to do that, the index will provide you with the liber (book) number and page number where you will find the deed recording each transaction of Sam Jones as grantor from 1955 to the present. All deed books are in the Register of Deeds Office, and they are arranged numerically. The lower the number, the older the deed, until you get back to the very first deed books which have alphabetical labels. When you find the correct deed the document will tell you from whom Sam Jones purchased the property. That person, in turn, was once previously a grantee of the property, so you retrace your steps, looking at earlier indexes until you find the deed that records his or her purchase of the property. In this way you follow the chain of transactions back through time hopefully until the earliest record of conveyance.

Before the creation of Rutherford County all transactions were recorded as part of Davidson County, and before that time all transactions were handled by the Southwest Territory government and then the state of North Carolina. These records contain transactions between the first white owners and the municipal authority who controlled this region before Tennessee and Rutherford County existed. The records have been microfilmed and are available at the Register of Deeds office.

You can follow the chain only so long as deeds were recorded. As one regresses in time the possibility increases



that one or more deeds to your property were not recorded, in which case you hit a dead end. You are always free to read all deeds back in time until you pick up a missing link, but most people lack the time and patience for that. There are some other steps you can take depending on how far back you have been able to go so far.

Nashville city directories exist from the 1860s until well into the 20th century. Many of the older directories list Murfreesboro residents and businesses at the back of each book, and this list may give you a name to attach to your property if you have reached a dead end. Also, the History Department at MTSU has created a complete photographic collection of Sanborn Fire Insurance Company atlases of Murfreesboro from 1886 to 1945. These maps show every property in the city of Murfreesboro including buildings, property boundaries, dimensions, building material, etc., and sometimes the name of the owner or resident appears as well. Again, if your property is in the city, old maps often list the names of property owners.

It is also possible that your chain of conveyance apparently comes to an end because the property was involved in an estate settlement of some sort. Be sure to check estate settlements, guardian records, and other documents that relate to wills and inheritances which are all listed farther along in this section. Also, it is possible that the missing owner of your property took



out a mortgage, had a lien applied against the property, or awarded a deed of easement. All these encumbrances would have had a special deed of trust created for the transaction, and this would appear in the deeds of trust along with a property description (boundaries, size of property, etc.) See item #19 below for a description of deeds of trust. Also, it is possible the deed was a subject of a court test (probation). Check the Probated Deeds (see record # 20).

There is one other step you can take if all else fails. Very often a deed describes the boundaries to a property by naming the owners of neighboring properties, "north along the property owned by Henry Jackson," for example. It's possible that by tracing Henry Jackson's property ownership you can find a deed that describes his property boundaries by the name of the person who owns your lot, again providing you with your missing link in the chain. Once you have this new name you can proceed with your deed search.

Interpreting the Information: A deed of conveyance provides a great deal of valuable information. The purpose of a deed of conveyance is to record the transfer of title of real property from one person to another. That property usually consists of land and the buildings on it, but before 1865 the definition of property included people--slaves--as well. A common assumption about deeds is that they describe buildings, so people often look





to deeds for building descriptions. These records do on occasion mention buildings and perhaps even their building material, but not all deeds provide a list of structures sitting on the property. Also, deeds sometimes mention the names of chattel slaves being sold, but sometimes they simply mention their sex and age. Essentially, we look to deeds of conveyance to inform us about specific pieces of property, and whatever additional facts the deed provides are a bonus.

All deeds will state the name of the grantor, of the grantee, the amount of land or exact nature of the item being conveyed, the consideration (price), and terms of conveyance. The document also lists any encumbrances on the conveyance (liens and easements that go along with the property, for example). When title to property is being conveyed the exact dimensions and boundaries of the property are "carefully" defined. From the mid-nineteenth century to the present these boundaries are relatively precise. Before this date deeds often describe boundaries by referring to natural objects as landmarks such as trees, creeks, and boulders. Dimensions are rendered in various ways. The accepted surveyor's units include .....

A deed that mentions buildings is particularly valuable, because often it is the structure we are researching, not the land on which it sits. But interpreting this information can be tricky. The structures standing at the time of the land's



conveyance may not be the same ones standing on the property now. If the deed mentions a stone structure where a wood frame barn now stands, we need to note that. On the other hand, if the deed mentions a wood frame barn where a stone barn now stands, the two may be the same building. Perhaps the wood barn had a stone facade added to it at some point.

If the deed does not mention structures we may not assume they did not exist on the property at the time of the conveyance of title. One way to judge if a building was constructed on a piece of land during the time a particular person owned the land is to compare the size of the property and the purchase price between the times the person purchased and sold the property. For example, we might be sure that a house in the Queen Anne style was built on a city lot sometime about 1890. Our deed search shows that John Brown sold the property to Sam Smith in 1888, and Sam Smith sold it to William Perkins in 1915. The question is, was the house standing on the lot when Sam Smith purchased it in 1888? We notice that he paid \$450 for the lot in 1888 and sold the same size lot for \$5800 in 1915. Almost certainly Sam Smith built the house, although the deed does not say precisely in what year. Still, we can narrow down the person who owned the lot at the time when the house was built and the broad time period during which he had the house built. Referring to other records (tax records, Sanborn atlases, directories) can



narrow down the date considerably.

But here, too, we must be careful. What if Sam Smith bought the property in 1888 for \$5000 and sold it in 1915 for \$6000? This could mean one of many things. Perhaps the house was standing on the lot when Smith bought it, making John Brown the builder (man for whom it was built). Or, perhaps a different house stood on the lot, Sam Smith tore it down and built the Queen Anne style home. Then again, perhaps Sam Smith took an existing house and modernized it by having it remodeled in the Queen Anne style. Again, by referring to other records, particularly property tax accounts, we might be able to solve these mysteries and arrive at the correct answer.

Changes in land values over time can reflect things other than improvements on the property. Inflation over time raises land values as does someone else's improvements that make our property more valuable even if we do nothing to it. Reassessments have the effect of raising the value of everybody's property. So we must interpret this kind of information very carefully, and we do not want to rely solely on the information from deeds to inform us about our property. But by taking the information the deed conveys and matching it with information from other sources we can compile a fairly clear record of land transactions and improvements on it.



19. Record: Church List (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
 Location: Register of Deeds Office

This is simply a card file index providing a list of church property and the book and page number on which the deed conveying that property to the religious institution is located. The file index is arranged by church denomination, then by civil district under each denominational heading, and finally by the name of the church.

20. Record: Trust Deeds (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
 Location: Register of Deeds Office  
 Microfilm: Indexes; 1864-1963--TSL&A, Register's Office  
 Indexes, 1864-1962; 1868-1901--Linebaugh Library

Trust deeds are records of financial and personal transactions that do not convey title to real property but that encumber property in some way. These include mortgages, liens, bonds, guardianships, partnerships, and limited partnerships, and corporate charters. These records also state when the trust was released (because the mortgage was paid off, the lien expired, the trusteeship came to an end, a partnership was dissolved). This information appears in a marginal notation stating the location of the release located in release books (see below #21). Trust deeds are indexed in the same manner as deeds of conveyance (see above #18). When the deed involves property it contains





boundary descriptions. All deeds of trust include the name of trustor and trustee (equivalent to grantor and grantee), the nature of the encumbrance, amount of consideration, and terms under which the trust is to continue. The index provides the book and page number where the deed is recorded.

21. Record: Chattel Mortgages (Register of Deeds), 1934-1964  
Location: Register of Deeds  
Microfilm: 1934-1964--at TSL&A, Register's Office

Chattel Mortgages record loans and bonds on personal property (non-real estate) such as buildings, crops, cattle, house trailers. They record the names of the mortgager and mortgagee, date of the transaction, and the nature of the property being mortgaged. Chattel mortgages were indexed with the Trust Deeds until 1962 when a separate index was maintained until 1964. These indexes are direct (by name of grantor) and reverse (by name of grantee) and also provide the date of the deed, the date the deed was filed, and the book and page number where it can be found.

In 1964 these records ceased to be used, and the Uniform Commercial Code Filing Notebook replaced them. These records contain the date, the filing number, names of the debtor and the secured party, and the filing fee.



22. Record: Probate Deed Book (County Court Clerk), 1917-1919,  
1921-1927, 1942-1944  
Location: County Archives

The word probate comes from the Latin word meaning "to prove." A probated deed is one that has been tested in court, and this record lists these transactions. It contains the names of the parties, date of the tested deed, date the deed was filed, amount of the consideration, number of acres, location of the property by civil district, type of deed, before whom the deed was acknowledged, state tax, and amount of the clerk's fee. There is no index to this record, but they appear chronologically by the date they were probated.

23. Record: Lien Book (Register of Deeds), 1932-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office  
Microfilm: 1932-1963--at TSL&A, Register's Office

The Lien book records liens placed on properties by court action. Each record contains the name of the court, nature of the lien, reason for placing the lien, the name of the creditor, amount of money or nature of the consideration involved, name of the property owner, description of the property, and any other condition to be met before the lien is removed. Lien books from 1931 to 1980 are indexed alphabetically at the front of each volume. The index is arranged by direct references (name of creditor or "lienor") and reverse or indirect references (name of



debtor or "lienee"). Names do not appear alphabetically under each letter division, however, so you must search the page for the person you are seeking. From 1980 to the present separate lien book indexes have been maintained but arranged in the same manner.

24. Record: Release Books (Register of Deeds), 1925-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

These volumes register releases of trusts, liens, mortgages, and other temporary encumbrances on property. It is in this record one finds the release indicated in the margin of the deed of trust. The release contains the name of the trustee and reason for the release. Releases are indexed in separate direct and reverse volumes published for specific chronological periods (1977-present, for example). Each index is divided into alphabetical pairs of letters ("AB", "CD", "EF"), and all names beginning with these two letters appear in that section otherwise without any alphabetical arrangement.

25. Record: Affidavit Release (Register of Deeds), 1973-1982  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

This record provides a release of a lien or other temporary encumbrance when the original trust document has been lost. It



contains the names of the creditor and the debtor, nature of the obligation, amount of the obligation, and an oath that the obligation has been met. An alphabetical listing by the last name of the trustor appears at the front of the book.

26. Record: Developers-Subdividers Index (Register of Deeds),  
1935-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

The index contains cards for each developer/subdivider or property, the property name and/or location, its civil district number, plat book (listed as "pb") and/or deed book and page (listed as "db"). The file is arranged by last name of the developer/subdivider.

27. Record: Restrictions [on Subdivisions] (Register of Deeds),  
1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

A card file index lists any restrictions on subdivisions of property, almost all of which are of recent origin. The index is arranged alphabetically by name of the restrictor and contains the location and civil district number of the property, the deed book and page number on which the restriction is described.





28. Record: Notes of Completion (Register of Deeds), 1970-present  
 Location: Register of Deeds Office

The record lists the completion of construction, improvement, or demolition of property and includes the name of the contractor, the date the work was completed, and notarization. At the front of each book is an alphabetical index by last name of the contractor which also contains the name of the property owner. Names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division.

## II. Taxes

29. Record: Tax Books (County Trustee), 1809-1813, 1867, 1871, 1875, 1877-present  
 Location: 1877-1973 (original), 1877-1935 (duplicates)--County Archives  
 1974-present (original)--County Trustee's Office  
 Microfilm: 1809-1813, 1867, 1871, 1875, 1877-1963--TSL&A, Register of Deeds

Tax records convey the most precise information about buildings of all county records. The books are created annually and are arranged by civil district number with entries appearing randomly by last name of the property owner. They are not indexed. Beside each property owner's name appears a series of columns



listing the location of the property, number and value of town lots (if any), number of acres of farm land, value of the land, value of other personal property, amount of state and county taxes owed, and the date the taxes were paid. The original tax books also contain property descriptions, which the duplicate tax books omit. These descriptions are often detailed and in the case of city buildings may include improvements to property to explain tax assessment increases.

30. Record: Minutes [of Tax Cases] (Chancery Court),  
1851-1856, 1899-1901  
Location: County Archives

The volume contains pre-printed forms for registering state actions against defendants in delinquent tax cases. The form lists the name of the defendant, nature of the court's decree, and the report of the Clerk and Master in the case. The volumes provide an alphabetical listing in the front by last name of the defendant, though names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division.

31. Record: Delinquent Tax Docket (Chancery Court), 1904  
Location: County Archives

The docket lists delinquent tax property assumed by the state and



conveys a description of the property, whether the property was redeemed and if so by whom, the amount of taxes owed, date and decree of the court. An alphabetical index appears at the front of the volumes by last name of the delinquent tax payer; names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division of the index.

32. Record: Sale Book (Chancery Court), 1920-1937  
Location: County Archives

The Court maintained this record of land sold because of failure to pay delinquent taxes. It contains the name of the court, title of the case, location and description of the property sold, by what process the property was sold, the name of the purchaser, and the amount of tax collected as a result of the sale. The volumes are indexed alphabetically by last name of defendant, but names do not appear in each letter category by strict alphabetical order.

33. Record: Sale Book (Circuit Court), 1896-1897, 1900,  
1907-1913  
Location: County Archives

The Circuit Court record is much like that of the Chancery Court. Here we have an indication of the apparent overlapping of court .



jurisdictions. All sales of property ordered by the Circuit Court are recorded here in much the same manner as in Chancery Court ordered sales.

34. Record: Land Sold for Taxes (County Court Clerk),  
1897-1918  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1897-1918--at TSL&A, County Clerk's Office

### III. Wills and Estates

35. Record: Record Books [Wills] (County Court Clerk), 1804-present  
Location: 1804-present (original, some xeroxes)--County Clerk's Office  
1804-1820, 1827--County Archives  
Microfilm: Indexes; 1804-1914--TSL&A, County Clerk  
Indexes; 1804-1914--Linebaugh Library  
1868-1879--MTSU  
  
Record: Will Books (County Court Clerk), 1879-1963  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: Indexes; 1879-1963--TSL&A, County Clerk  
Indexes; 1879-1925--Linebaugh Library, MTSU

Record books primarily contain wills and inventories of estates, but one can find here also records of indentures, sales, and other transactions involving property. They are contained in annual volumes in which the documents are arranged





chronologically. Each volume contains an index in the front of the book arranged alphabetically by last name of the deceased, the estate, owner of the indenture, etc. In addition, there is a separate index volume for the years 1883-1947.

Wills are highly personal documents. While their writing follows a certain formula, the way in which a person disposes of his or her property says a great deal about the deceased's particular social status, family and personal relationships, and participation in civic affairs. The specific terms of the will tell us about people who were important in the life of the deceased including members of his or her family, friends, neighbors, wards, and members of the extended family. Who is not mentioned in the will is of significance, too. Often people left bequests to civic organizations such as churches, clubs, and schools. How much the deceased bequeathed tells much of the person's wealth and social status as well.

Interpreting this information can be tricky. We tend to assume that the person receiving the greatest bequest was the person the deceased most loved. Actually, common and civil law often regulates who gets what property, and if someone is not mentioned in a will it may well be that the deceased had already given him or her a bequest outside the terms of the will before dying. Still, wills do contain fascinating hints about personal relationships if we read these documents carefully.



Inventories often appear in the record books, as well. These documents list assest and liabilities in the estate. An asset can be a material possession like land, buildings, saleable goods (in the case of a merchant); it can be stocks, bonds, money, insurance policies, investments of any sort; it can also be debts owed to the deceased. All will be included. Some inventories even indicate furniture items from each room, thereby illustrating at least one person's (and perhaps a common) pattern of living.

Liabilities are any charges against the estate. In these lists we sometimes find hints about how the individual, and average people, lived in the past. One will, for instance, listed debts owed to a man who painted his house, attached new numbers on the porch, and installed a new picket fence. Prices charged showed what the cost of living was like as well as proving that at the time of his death houses in Murfreesboro were numbered.

But again, interpreting this information calls for care. In the past, historians have incorrectly assumed that the inventory of an estate included the bulk of the deceased's possessions, and some house museums have decided in what rooms to place particular pieces of furniture based on inventories. But a person often gave away much of his or her property before dying. And before a will could be probated it was possible for family members to take



away prized items, thus skewing the inventory. Still, if used carefully inventories can reveal much about an individual's life and a community's culture.

36. Record: Executors Bonds (County Court Clerk), 1874-1960  
 Location: County Clerk's Office  
 Indexes, 1907-1914, 1910--County Archives  
 Microfilm: 1874-1945--TSL&A, County Clerk  
 1906-1945--Linebaugh Library

Executors of estates were required to post a bond for faithful fulfillment of their responsibilities. These records contain the name of the executor and of the deceased (estate), whether the estate was bonded and if so the amount, dates of the court's approval, the judge's name, county of the executor's residence, court costs, date the estate was settled, book and page number of the County Court Minute Books in which the settlement appears, and often a power of attorney attached to the bond. Books are arranged chronologically by year, and an alphabetical listing appears at the front of each volume by last name of the deceased. A separate index also exists in the County Archives for the years 1907-1914 and 1910.

37. Record: Administrators Bonds (County Court Clerk),  
 1873-1965  
 Location: 1873-1900, 1910--County Archives  
 1900-1960--County Clerk's Office



Microfilm: 1873-1965--TSL&A, County Clerk

These are similar to executors bonds as described above, and they provide the same kinds of information.

38. Record: Inventory Records and Books (County Court Clerk),  
1828-1829, 1883-1963  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1828-1829, 1883-1963--TSL&A, County Clerk,  
Linebaugh Library  
1828-1829--MTSU

39. Record: Insolvent Estates, Minutes and Records (County  
Court Clerk), 1853-1886, 1900-1960  
Location: 1853-1886, 1900-1926--County Archives  
1926-1960--County Clerk's Office

Often estates lacked the resources to pay off creditors. In this case the County Court established an administrator to handle all assets and claims. This record lists transactions in such cases. The left hand page includes a record of the court proceedings in the matter. The right hand page lists the name of the deceased, name of the administrator, the case number, how the case was proven, the names of all creditors with the balance due each one plus interest, and the name of the receiver for the account. Volumes from 1900 to 1960 are indexed in the front of each volume, with alphabetical lists of the last name of the deceased. Within each letter division of the index names do not





appear in strict alphabetical order

40. Record: Administrative Rule Docket (County Court Clerk),  
1939-1942  
Location: County Archives

This records claims against administered estates listing the name and address of the administrator and name and former address of the deceased, the date the case was filed, pleadings, exceptions, orders of the court and dates they were filed, court costs, and the reason for assessing costs against the estate, names of creditors, amounts of their claims, and remarks. Pages often include newspaper clippings of public notices regarding the settlement of the estate. Each book contains, in the front, an alphabetical index by last name of the deceased, though names do not appear within each letter division in strict alphabetical order.

41. Record: Claims Against Estates (County Court Clerk),  
1921-1929, 1959-present  
Location: 1921-1929--County Archives  
1959-present--County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1921-1929--TSL&A, County Clerk

As the name suggests, these documents list all claims made against estates and contain the name of the deceased, date the claim was filed and by whom, type and amount of the claim,



interest and costs, and the total amount due, as well as any receipts made for payments toward the debt. The more recent records (after 1959) present the same information in a simpler format. Each volume from 1921-1929 is indexed at the front of the book by the last name of the deceased. Records maintained by the County Clerk's office must be requested.

42. Record: Probate Docket and Record of Claims (County Court Clerk), 1943-1960  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1939-1943, 1947-1960--TSL&A, County Clerk

Very similar to the Claims Against Estates, these documents record the name of the deceased and of the administrator or executor, the deceased's former place of residence, amount of the bond issued, names and addresses of creditors, nature of the claim, and the amount of the claim. There is an alphabetical listing by last name of the deceased at the front of the book, though within each letter division names do not appear in strict alphabetical order.

43. Record: Estate Sales (County Court Clerk), 1883-1954  
Location: County Archives

Listed here are the names of the deceased and of the administrator, the date of the sale, items sold, who bought the



items, and the price paid for each. The document is indexed in the front by an alphabetical listing by last name of the deceased; again, names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division.

44. Record: Distribution of Estates Book (County Court Clerk), 1900-1904  
Location: County Archives

This volume contains receipts made to the county court clerk for money he paid out in transacting the business of the court which included payments made in estate settlements, sales of land to settle estate cases, etc. The record contains the date of payment, clerk's signature, names of plaintiffs and defendants, amount of payment, and the reason for the payment. At the front of the volume is an alphabetical listing of plaintiffs showing the page number on which receipts for that case may be found.

45. Record: Estate Settlements (County Court Clerk),  
1883-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office

These records list receipts and payments made to settle the debts of estates. Each document includes the name of the deceased (estate), total debts of the estate, names of creditors, deceased's holdings, time and date of filing the claim, a list of



heirs and their relationship to the deceased along with each one's share of the estate, and a record of disbursements of money. A separate index exists for books 1 through 9 (to 1949) listing the names of the deceased in alphabetical groupings, but not alphabetically within each letter division. From 1949 to the present an index is located at the front of each volume.

46. Record: Administrator's Settlements (County Court Clerk),  
1868-1889  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1868-1889--TSL&A, County Clerk
47. Record: Administrators and Executors Minute Books (County  
Court Clerk), 1876-1909  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1876-1909--TSL&A, County Clerk
48. Record: Inheritance Record (County Court Clerk), 1898-1919  
Location: County Clerk's Office

This is a record of payments of inheritance taxes providing the name of the deceased (estate), the date the inheritance tax was paid, the type of property in the estate, amount of tax paid, who paid it, and the number of heirs. This record is not indexed.





## BUSINESS INFORMATION

49. Record: Merchants License Applications and Oaths (County Court Clerk), 1836-1860, 1870-1899  
Location: County Archives

Each merchant had to post apply for a license in order to engage in business, and these invaluable documents record these. They include the type of license applied for, the name of the applicant, duration of the license, date the application was filed, signature of the applicant, and often an oath of a referee attesting to the soundness of the applicant. Licenses from 1870 through 1884 also provide the place of business and amounts of state, county, and school taxes paid. The volumes are arranged chronologically with no index. The 1898-1899 volume also is arranged by type of business, and the first 89 pages of this book are indexed alphabetically by name of applicant.

50. Record: Merchants Bonds (County Court Clerk), 1842-1848, 1872-1904, 1908-1920  
Location: 1842-1848, 1872-1877, 1889-1892, 1896-1904, 1898-1899, 1908-1920--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1842-1848, 1873-1888, 1892-1903--TSL&A, County Clerk

These records provide the name of the merchant bonded, the date when the bond was presented, and the amount of the bond. All



volumes except those for 1842- 1848 and 1898-1899 are indexed at the front of the book alphabetically by last name of the merchant, and then within each letter division chronologically by date of the bond.

51. Record: License Expirations (County Court Clerk), 1879-1901 [now called the Business Tax Book records exist in the County Clerk's Office for 1971-1974]  
Location: 1879-1901--County Archives

The expirations contain the name of the licensee, the type of business being licensed, and the expiration date of the license. The recent Business Tax Book includes the date of the license, license number, description and name of the business, expiration date of the license, class of the business, license minimum, and the amount of the fee. An alphabetical index by last name of license holder appears at the front of the volumes, but within each letter division names appear chronologically by date of the license rather than in strict alphabetical order.

52. Record: Partnership Agreements (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

A file card index lists partnerships, agreements that appear in the Trust Deeds. Each card, arranged alphabetically by name of



partners or of partnerships, contains the book and page number of the trust deeds on which the agreement appears.

53. Record: Charters (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

A file card index lists the book and page number in the trust deeds on which appears the charter of organizations including the name of the corporation, its purpose, status (for profit or not-for-profit), and powers of the board of directors. It also often includes the names of the founding members.

54. Record: Dentist Register (County Court Clerk), 1891-1919  
Location: County Archives

The register lists all dentists, the county in Tennessee in which he previously practiced, the date of registration, names of the president and secretary of the State Board of Dental Examiners who registered him to practice, and the date the license was filed. The record is not indexed. Certificates are listed chronologically.

55. Record: Physician's Register (County Court Clerk), 1907-1962  
Location: 1907-1946--County Archives  
1947-1962--County Clerk



Microfilm: 1907-1962--TSL&A, County Clerk

License certificates for physicians contain the physician's license number, name, the college from which the physician graduated, the date of his diploma, date the license was issued, names of the president and secretary of the State Board, amount of the license fee, and the date the certificate was recorded. In the front of the volume is an alphabetical listing by last name of the physician.

56. Record: Contractor Licenses (County Court Clerk), 1980-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office

This is a book of preprinted forms with actual licenses taped into the book. The license contains the name of the company, the date the license was recorded, and the date of the license. An alphabetical listing of contractors appears in the front of the volume.

57. Record: Beverage Bonds (County Court Clerk), 1952-1958  
Location: County Archives

These are bonds of surety presented by persons seeking a license to sell alcoholic beverages. Each contains the name of the licensee, the surety, an address where the beverage will be sold, the name of the deceased, the date the inheritance tax was paid, the type of property in the estate, amount of tax paid, who paid it, and the number of heirs. This record is not indexed.





the day the license was signed, amount of the bond, the state registration number, and the county permit number. An alphabetical listing appears at the front of the volume by last name of distributor.

58. Record: Liquor Shipments Record (County Court Clerk),  
1915-1916  
Location: County Archives

Liquor shipments received in the county are recorded including the date received, the type of liquor shipped, date of the shipment, destination, the quantity of liquor, name and address of shipper, number of the waybill (the document describing the shipment), name and address of deliverer, and the name of the receiver. The record is not indexed.

59. Record: Privilege Licenses (County Court Clerk), 1884-  
1909  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1884-1909--TSL&A, County Clerk



## BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

60. Record: Merchants License Applications and Oaths (County Court Clerk), 1836-1860, 1870-1899  
Location: County Archives

Each merchant had to apply for a license in order to engage in business, and these invaluable documents record these. They include the type of license applied for, the name of the applicant, duration of the license, date the application was filed, signature of the applicant, and often an oath of a referee attesting to the soundness of the applicant. Licenses from 1870 through 1884 also provide the place of business and amounts of state, county, and school taxes paid. The volumes are arranged chronologically with no index. The 1898-1899 volume also is arranged by type of business, and the first 89 pages of this book are indexed alphabetically by name of applicant.

Similar in nature to these are the Privilege Licenses (1884-1909) maintained by the County Court Clerk and available on microfilm at the Clerk's Office and at the Tennessee State Library and Archives. These records provide the name of the merchant, amount of state, county, and school taxes paid, the nature of the business, number of months the license will run, the date of the license and of



its expiration, the residence of the applicant, and casual remarks. At the front of this volume is a listing of types of business in no particular order and the page numbers on which licenses for these enterprises appear.

61. Record: Merchants Bonds (County Court Clerk), 1842-1848,  
1872-1904, 1908-1920  
Location: 1842-1848, 1872-1877, 1889-1892, 1896-1904, 1898-  
1899, 1908-1920--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1842-1848, 1873-1888, 1892-1903--TSL&A, County Clerk

These records provide the name of the merchant bonded, the date when the bond was presented, and the amount of the bond. All volumes except those for 1842- 1848 and 1898-1899 are indexed at the front of the book alphabetically by last name of the merchant, and then within each letter division chronologically by date of the bond.

62. Record: License Expirations (County Court Clerk), 1879-  
1901 [now called the Business Tax Book records  
exist in the County Clerk's Office for 1971-1974]  
Location: 1879-1901--County Archives

The expirations contain the name of the licensee, the type of business being licensed, and the expiration date of the license. The recent Business Tax Book includes the date of the license, license number, description and name of the business, expiration date of the license, class of the



business, license minimum, and the amount of the fee. An alphabetical index by last name of license holder appears at the front of the volumes, but within each letter division names appear chronologically by date of the license rather than in strict alphabetical order.

63. Record: Partnership Agreements (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

A file card index lists partnerships, agreements that appear in the Trust Deeds. Each card, arranged alphabetically by name of partners or of partnerships, contains the book and page number of the trust deeds on which the agreement appears.

64. Record: Charters (Register of Deeds), 1804-present  
Location: Register of Deeds Office

A file card index lists the book and page number in the trust deeds on which appears the charter of organizations including the name of the corporation, its purpose, status (for profit or not-for-profit), and powers of the board of directors. It also often includes the names of the founding members.





65. Record: Dentist Register (County Court Clerk), 1891-1919  
Location: County Archives

The register lists all dentists, the county in Tennessee in which he previously practiced, the date of registration, names of the president and secretary of the State Board of Dental Examiners who registered him to practice, and the date the license was filed. The record is not indexed. Certificates are listed chronologically.

66. Record: Physician's Register (County Court Clerk), 1907-1962  
Location: 1907-1946--County Archives  
1947-1962--County Clerk  
Microfilm: 1907-1962--TSL&A, County Clerk

License certificates for physicians contain the physician's license number, name, the college from which the physician graduated, the date of his diploma, date the license was issued, names of the president and secretary of the State Board, amount of the license fee, and the date the certificate was recorded. In the front of the volume is an alphabetical listing by last name of the physician.

67. Record: Contractor Licenses (County Court Clerk), 1980-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office

This is a book of preprinted forms with actual licenses



taped into the book. The license contains the name of the company, the date the license was recorded, and the date of the license. An alphabetical listing of contractors appears in the front of the volume.

68. Record: Beverage Bonds (County Court Clerk), 1952-1958  
Location: County Archives

These are bonds of surety presented by persons seeking a license to sell alcoholic beverages. Each contains the name of the licensee, the surety, an address where the beverage will be sold, the day the license was signed, amount of the bond, the state registration number, and the county permit number. An alphabetical listing appears at the front of the volume by last name of distributor.

- 69.. Record: Liquor Shipments Record (County Court Clerk),  
1915-1916  
Location: County Archives

Liquor shipments received in the county are recorded including the date received, the type of liquor shipped, date of the shipment, destination, the quantity of liquor, name and address of shipper, number of the waybill (the document describing the shipment), and names and addresses of deliverer and receiver. The record is not indexed.



## LEGAL INFORMATION

## I. Chancery Court

70. Record: Appearance Docket, 1923-1939  
Location: County Archives

This record lists the first appearance of all cases in court. It contains the date the case was filed, the names of attorneys, the title (style) of the case, any security posted, and any actions taken. The record is not indexed, and cases are listed in chronological order of their appearance before the court.

71. Record: Enrollment, 1866-1888, 1892-1898  
Location: County Archives

The enrollment is a list of civil cases before the chancery court containing the names of the defendants and plaintiffs, the cause of the legal action, dates of trial, disposal of the case, nature and text of any process filed in the case, and the date the case was recorded. An alphabetical index listing the last names of plaintiffs and defendants appears in the front of each volume, but names do not appear in alphabetical order within each letter division.



72. Record: Rule Dockets, 1843-1852, 1866-1963  
 Location: 1843-1852, 1864-1866, 1887-1893, 1912--County Archives  
 Microfilm: 1866-1963--at TSL&A, Chancery Court  
 1866-1909--at Linebaugh Library

These are records of original processes issued and filed relative to each case appearing before the court. It contains the names of parties and their attorneys, the kind of action taken, orders of the court relative to the case, volume and page number in the minute books where the hearing appears. The types of cases heard include divorces, writs of injunction, collections, partition sales, forced land sales, enforcement of liens, foreclosures, and the removal of guardianships. All but the 1912 volume are indexed alphabetically by last name of defendants and plaintiffs in the front of the book, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

73. Record: Trial Docket, 1897-1911  
 Location: County Archives

The docket is the trial agenda for the court containing the charges in each case, the names of defendants, and any remarks. An alphabetical listing of last names of defendants and plaintiffs appears at the front of each volume, each page being given over to two letters ("A-B,"





"C-D," for example). Names are not arranged alphabetically within each division.

74. Record: Minutes, 1845-1860, 1864-1964  
Location: 1851-1855, 1900-1901--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1845-1860, 1864-1964--at TSL&A, Chancery Court  
1873-1877 (Books K-N)--MTSU

Minutes of all trial proceedings in the chancery court appear here. They contain for each case the names of defendants, offenses and charges, date of the trial, verdict of the court, and the court's sentence. Volumes for 1900 and 1901 are for tax cases only. An alphabetical listing for all volumes other than 1900 and 1901 appears in the back of each volume listing the last names of plaintiffs, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

75. Record: Exhibits, 1876-1889  
Location: County Archives

The record lists trustee's payments to creditors, principally in relation to the case of Dromgoole vs McCullough. Each record contains the date of the payment, to whom paid and for what purpose, the receipt #, amount of the payment. Also, at the end of the volume, pages 500-525, appears a long deposition of Robert J. Tompkins in the



case. The book is not indexed.

76. Record: Judgment Index Book, 1916-1949  
Location: County Archives

A list of judgments, this contains the name of the person ordered to pay a judgment, the date of payment, the case's docket number, the cause of the judgment (case citation), and the amount of the payment. An alphabetical index lists the name of persons ordered to pay judgments, and directs the reader to the minute book and page number where the case record appears.

77. Record: Execution Docket, 1871-1893, 1899-1935  
Location: County Archives

Execution dockets record financial transactions in each case before the chancery court containing the date of the court's term, the names of parties involved, the title (style) of the case, nature of actions taken, amount of judgments rendered, and the amount and date paid. An alphabetical arrangement of last names of defendants appears in the front of each book, though names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.



78. Record: Miscellaneous Bond Book, 1921-1933  
Location: County Archives

This is a record of bonds posted for various purposes in action before the court. Each record contains the names of the principals and their sureties, the title of the case, amount and date of the bond, and the specific condition the bond was intended to ensure. An alphabetical listing by last name of each person bonded appears at the front of each volume, though names do not appear in alphabetical order within each letter division.

79. Record: Distribution Docket, 1887-1905, 1919-1921, 1937-1940  
Location: County Archives

These volumes are records of funds belonging to an estate or collected by the court and then distributed to creditors. Each record lists the case number, names of parties in the case, the date, judgment rendered by the court, costs of the court, receipts, and testamentary letters. An alphabetical listing of last names of defendants or deceased (in the case of estates) appears at the front of each volume, but names do not appear in strict alphabetical order within each letter division.

80. Record: Cash Book, 1929-1938



Location: County Archives

Daily records of receipts listing on the left page the date of the receipt, the title of the case, and the amount of money received and on the right page the date, from whom money has been collected, the check number, and the amount. These records are not indexed.

81. Record: Cash Journal, 1877-1887  
Location: County Archives

Record of receipts and disbursements by the Clerk and Master showing the date of receipt, the amount received, the source of the money and for what purpose it was paid, the amount of the debit or credit in the account, the name of the account, and the person or case to whom the money is to be credited. These records are not indexed.

82. Record: Ledger, 1886  
Location: County Archives

Record of receipts and disbursements of money acquired through litigation including the date the money was received or disbursed, from whom it was received or to whom it was disbursed, the amount, by whom it was received or disbursed, and a list of items purchased with the money. These records are not indexed.





## II. Circuit Court

83. Record: Appearance Docket, 1807-1808, 1833-1836  
Location: County Archives

Records the first appearance of all cases in court, containing the date the case was filed, names of attorneys, the title of the case, any bond that may have been posted, and actions taken in the case. The volumes are not indexed, each case being recorded in chronological order.

84. Record: Enrollment Book, 1845-1847, 1855-1858, 1864-1886  
Location: County Archives

Copies of original processes relating to civil cases before the court. Each contains the names of plaintiffs and defendants, causes of legal action, dates of trials held in the matter, final disposition of the case, nature and text of the process, and the day the case was recorded. Some records include bills and petitions, answers and pleas, and depositions. The records for 1864-1886 are indexed chronologically and then alphabetically by the last name of the defendant, showing the page number of the docket in which the case is listed.



85. Record: Rule Docket, 1923-1948  
Location: County Archives

These volumes record state (criminal) cases before the court showing the names of defendants, offenses and charges against them, defendants' attorneys, state witnesses, the justice of the peace involved, any bonds posted, nature of the indictment or presentment returned from the grand jury, subpoenas issued for state witnesses, grand jury term that indicted the defendant, mileage, term, attendance record of jurors, and remarks. Types of charges brought included murder, larceny, manufacture of whiskey, etc.

86. Record: Trial Docket, 1816-1818, 1867-1871, 1874 (index only), 1881-1915  
Location: County Archives

Record of all cases set for trial containing the date of the court term, the case number, names of attorneys, plaintiffs, defendants, date the case was filed, rules and orders of the court. The volumes are not indexed.

87. Record: General Index to Civil [Criminal] Minutes and Execution Docket, 1893, 1952  
Location: Circuit Court  
Microfilm: TSL&A, Circuit Court, Linebaugh Library

An index by title of case (defendants and plaintiffs) for



trials appearing before the Circuit Court.

88. Record: Civil or Criminal Minutes, 1849-1851, 1865-1892,  
1898-1963  
Location: Circuit Court  
Microfilm: 1849-1851, 1865-1892, 1898-1963--at TSL&A,  
Circuit Court  
1873-1883--at MTSU  
1849-1903--at Linebaugh Library

Trial minutes for cases appearing before the Circuit Court.

89. Record: Minute Book, 1879-1898, 1913-1915  
Location: 1879-1890--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1890-1898, 1913-1915--TSL&A, Circuit Court

Minutes of trials containing the proceedings, names of defendants, offenses charged, date of the trial, verdict of the jury, and the sentence of the court. An alphabetical index by last name of the defendants appears at the beginning of each book.

90. Record: Recognizance, 1885-1886, 1889  
Location: County Archives

This records bonds posted to assure one's appearance in court, and it contains the names of defendants, sureties (the holder of the bond), the sum owed to the state, the date of appearance in court, charges against the defendant,



and the clerk's name. In the front of the book is an alphabetical listing of defendants by first letter of the last name, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

91. Record: Jury Book, 1936-1958  
Location: County Archives

A record of jurors serving in cases before the circuit court showing the date of the court term, the title of the case, the nature of action being taken or the offense, and the names of jurors. This volume is not indexed.

92. Record: Jury List, 1826-1841, 1898-1933, 1935, 1959-1965  
Location: County Archives  
Microfilm: 1826-1841--at TSL&A, Circuit Court

These volumes list jurors and the dates they served on the jury. There is no index, and names appear in chronological order by date of their service.

93. Record: Witness Book, 1866-1893  
Location: County Archives

The information conveyed varies over the years, but in general these records contain names of parties in trials, types of cases reported and charges made, days the witness





served and the distance he or she traveled to appear. In the front of the book is an alphabetical listing by last name of the witness, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

94. Record: Judgment Book, 1869-1873, 1880-1912, 1929-1948  
Location: County Archives

A record of judgments rendered by the circuit court containing the book and page numbers of the docket in which the case is recorded, the number and title of the case, names of plaintiffs and defendants, the judgment rendered in the case, and the amount of the court's costs. Indexes are arranged alphabetically by last name of defendant and plaintiff, though names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

95. Record: Execution Docket: Civil, 1855-1861, 1866-1948  
Location: 1855-1861--Circuit Court  
1866-1948--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1855-1861--at TSL&A, Circuit Court

Financial records of trials in civil cases showing the date of the court term, the title of the case, the nature of the action taken in each case, the amount of the judgment and court costs, and the amount and date of payment. Execution dockets are indexed with the court minutes (see record #66



above).

96. Record: Execution Docket: Criminal, 1855-1861, 1873,  
1877-1923, 1928-1938  
Location: 1855-1861--Circuit Court  
1873, 1877-1923, 1928-1938--County Archives

Financial records of transactions in criminal cases showing the date of the court term, the title of the case, nature of the action taken or charges made, the amount of any judgment and court costs, and the amount and date of payment.

Execution dockets are indexed with the court minutes (see record #66 above.)

97. Record: Cash Journal, 1957-1962  
Location: County Archives

Record of receipts and disbursements for accounts involving court action showing the date, the amount of disbursement from money received and the reason for the payment, the amount of the debit or credit, name of the account and bank where the account is located, and the person or the case being credited. These records are not indexed.

98. Record: Grand Jury Docket, 1902-1903  
Location: County Archives



This lists actions placed before the grand jury including the names of defendants, offenses with which they were charged, and the date of the indictment or finding of no true bill. This record is not indexed.

99. Record: Grand Jury Notes, 1889-1901, 1905-1908,  
1911-1922, 1927-1930  
Location: County Archives

These are random notes made by grand jury members during deliberations on disposition of cases. They are not indexed.

### III. County Judge and County Court

100. Record: Juvenile Court Records (County Judge), 1912, 1937  
Location: County Archives

These are records of cases before the juvenile court, originally under the jurisdiction of the County Judge. They provide the date, number and title of the case, offenses charged, the age, race, and sex of the defendant, orders of the court, dates of arrest and trial of the defendant, and the final disposition of the case. The 1937 volume is indexed in the front of the book by last name of the defendant.



102. Record: Bills of Cost, 1911-1916, 1934-1958  
Location: County Archives

A record of payments in court cases containing the name of the defendant, the date of sentencing and the offense, from what court the defendant was sentenced, name of the officer, amount of the fine, whether the defendant was sent to the road detail, costs of the justice of the peace, the officer's costs, cash paid, and any remarks. This record is not indexed.

103. Record: Enrollment Docket [Cases], 1867-1893  
Location: County Archives  
Microfilm: Index, 1867-1893--at TSL&A, County Clerk,  
Linebaugh Library  
Index, 1867-1872--at MTSU

A narrative record of proceedings principally in disputes over land and sales before the county court, containing the names of plaintiffs and defendants, a description of events and circumstances relevant to the case, and a record of the court's final disposition. A separate index was maintained listing names of defendants and plaintiffs alphabetically by last name, but names do not appear in alphabetical order within each letter division.





104. Record: Rule Docket, 1818-1821, 1828-1842, 1851-1909,  
1918-1949  
Location: 1818-1821, 1828-1842, 1851-1909, 1808-1949--  
County Archives  
1918-1949--County Clerk  
Microfilm: 1918-1949--at TSL&A, County Clerk

A listing of suits for sale of land, partitioning of estates, and habeas corpus showing names of petitioners and defendants, the date of the petition and of the hearing, names of jurors, names of attorneys, dates when bonds were filed (if any), decree of the court, and the final disposition of the case. Some volumes are indexed at the front by last name of defendants and petitioners.

105. Record: Execution Docket, 1865-1878, 1924-1950  
Location: County Archives

A record of judgments rendered in the county court showing the term and year of the court, names of parties involved, the court's judgment and costs, amounts paid and when payments were paid. Volumes for 1924-1950 are indexed at the front of each book alphabetically by last name of plaintiff, though names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

106. Record: Jury Claims, 1856-1885  
Location: County Archives



Lists of jurors serving on cases before the county court arranged chronologically by the dates of their service showing their names, dates of service, and amounts due to them. These records are not indexed.

107. Record: Cash Journal, 1918-1936, 1968-1973  
Location: County Archives

A record of receipts and disbursements by the clerk of the probate and quarterly courts showing the date, from whom money was received, the title of the case, and the amount received. If the money collected is to satisfy a state tax, the specific tax satisfied is also indicated. The 1918-1936 records are indexed by an alphabetical listing in the front of the volumes by the last names of defendants and plaintiffs, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

108. Record: Trial Sessions, 1807-1808  
Location: County Clerk  
Microfilm: 1807-1808--at TSL&A, County Clerk, Linebaugh Library

A listing of court cases containing the names of parties, the cause of action taken, the name of sureties, rules and orders of the court. This volume is not indexed.



109. Record: Trial Docket, 1842-1852  
Location: County Clerk  
Microfilm: 1842-1852--at TSL&A, County Clerk, Linebaugh Library

A record of trials before the County Court listing the date of trial, the case #, parties involved, the amount of judgment, names of returning officers, bills of cost, and the date of the execution order.

#### IV. General Sessions Court

110. Record: Magistrates Docket: Civil Cases, 1842-1852, 1884-1947  
Location: County Archives

Record of trials before the General Sessions Court showing the date of the trial, the case number, names of plaintiffs and defendants, the decision of the court, amount of the court's judgment and the court costs. Some volumes are indexed at the front alphabetically by the last name of the plaintiffs.

111. Record: Magistrates Docket: Criminal Cases, 1901-1947  
Location: County Archives

A record of criminal trials showing the date of the trial, the case number, names of defendants, action of the court,



and a list of witnesses claiming fees. Some volumes have an alphabetical index at the front of the volume by last name of defendants. The index provides the case number, not the page number.





## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

This section of the guide describes records associated with the administration of county government. Here one finds the principal records of the county court acting as a legislature, receipts and disbursements of county agencies, bonds and oaths of appointed county officials, and other records like these. Records in this section are arranged by the county agency that created them.

112. Record: Receipts for Papers (Chancery Court), 1911-1924  
Location: County Archives

This records files and papers removed from the court office by lawyers for their review and then returned, containing a list of the specific items removed and the date removed, the name of the borrower, the case name or number, and the date the material was removed. An alphabetical listing appears at the beginning of the book giving the last names of borrowers; each page indexes two letters, but names do not appear in alphabetical order within each two letter division.

113. Record: Minutes of the County Board of Health (Circuit Court Clerk), 1930-1964  
Location: Circuit Court



Microfilm: 1930-1964--at TSL&A, Circuit Court

These minutes record the deliberations of the County Board of Health under the authority of the Circuit Court.

114. Record: Index to Minute Books (County Court Clerk),  
1804-present  
Location: 1804-present--County Clerk  
1804-1824 (Books A-T)--County Archives  
Microfilm: 1804-1963--at TSL&A, County Clerk, Linebaugh  
Library  
1804-1898--MTSU
115. Record: Minute Books (County Court Clerk), 1804-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1804-1962--TSL&A, County Clerk  
1804-1904--Linebaugh Library  
1804-1898--MTSU

This is the official record of the county court containing debates and discussions on all matters pertaining to the legislative functions of this body. The bound indexes are arranged .....A manuscript index to books A through T is maintained in the County Archives, but it is in very fragile condition. Fortunately, it has been microfilmed, so the original will not have to be used. This index is confusing to use since each letter division begins on one set of pages and then continues farther along in the index. So anyone using this document must be careful to review the entire index to find the subject for which he or she is looking.



116. Record: Index to Quarterly Meetings (County Court Clerk),  
1880-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1880-1963--at TSL&A, County Clerk, Linebaugh  
Library, MTSU
117. Record: Quarterly Minute Books (County Court Clerk),  
1879-present  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1879-1963--at TSL&A, County Clerk,  
1879-1918--at Linebaugh Library  
1879-1899--at MTSU

As with the daily minutes, these record the proceedings of the  
quarterly court.....

118. Record: Magistrates Bonds and Oaths (County Court Clerk),  
1872-1911, 1942-1956  
Location: County Clerk's Office

Magistrates were required to swear an oath of faithful service  
and to post a bond to ensure that, and this volume records such  
oaths and bonds. Volumes to 1942 are indexed alphabetically at  
the front of the book by last name of the magistrate, but names  
do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

119. Record: Notary Public Bonds (County Court Clerk),  
1947-present  
Location: 1947-1952--County Archives  
1953-present--County Clerk's Office

Notaries were required to post a bond to ensure fulfillment of



their duties, and these volumes record these bonds and oaths. They contain the name of the notary, the surety company, the date of the certificate, and the date the commission expires. An alphabetical listing at the front of the book contains the last names of notaries, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

120.. Record: Revenue Docket (County Court Clerk), 1828-1900,  
1961-present  
Location: 1828-1900--County Archives  
1961-present--County Clerk's Office

This is a general ledger accounting for sales tax revenues and the distribution of moneys including the date of the transaction, the name of the firm or individual from whom money was received, the nature of the sale, duration of the license, disposition of the tax to state and county funds, the total amount of the tax paid, and the clerk's fee. These records are not indexed.

121. Record: Warrant Register (County Court Clerk), 1899-1930  
Location: County Archives

A record of disbursements of county money on warrant (bills) showing the warrant number, to whom the payment is made and for what purpose, the amount paid, and the date the warrant was issued.





122. Record: Cash Journal (County Court Clerk), 1918-1936,  
1968-1973  
Location: County Archives

This records all cash receipts and disbursements by the County Court Clerk as a state revenue agent and as a clerk of the probate and quarterly court. It contains the date of payments, the name of the person paying and the purpose of the payment, the amount, the account to which the payment is credited, and the amount deposited. Records of disbursement show the date, the name of the payee, the purpose of the payment and amount paid, bank withdrawals, and the current balance in the account. The record was succeeded by the Daily Cash Record Book. Each volume from 1918-1936 contains an index of transactions in chronological order. Other volumes are not indexed.

123. Record: Daily Cash Record (County Court Clerk),  
1960-1972  
Location: County Clerk's Office

124. Record: Index to Sales Record Books (County Court Clerk)  
Sales Record Books (County Court Clerk),  
1883-1954  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: Index, 1883-1954--at TSL&A, County Clerk,



Linebaugh Library

125. Record: Audit Report (County Court Clerk), 1916-1925  
Location: County Archives

Annual audit reports appear here containing remarks and statements on how well each county official was maintaining records.

126. Record: Road Orders (County Court Clerk), 1871-1893  
Location: County Archives

The volume contains all orders of the county court relative to road work done in the county including the appointment of road overseers, juries of view which served in condemnation proceedings, and authorizations for classifications of roads. There is an alphabetical index in the front of the book by the last names of road commissioners. The index only covers pages 336 to the end.

127. Record: Road Bond Book (County Court Clerk), 1881-1887  
Location: County Archives

This record contains contracts between road commissioners, the County Judge, and contractors and contains the names of



commissioners, the County Judge, and contractors, the road district number, location of road sections to be covered by the contract, the descriptions of any bridges included, cash allowanced allowable to contractors, the date of the contract, sureties, and the date of the bond. An alphabetical index by last name of the person bonded appears at the front of the volume, but names do not appear alphabetically within each letter division.

128. Record: Road Appointment Book (County Court Clerk),  
1889-1890  
Location: County Archives

This volume is a record of appointments of road overseers containing the road district number, name of the road, the names of road teams, the width and specification of the road, the date of appointment, name of the overseer, names of road hands, minute book citation, and the date of appointment. The record is not indexed.

129. Record: Index to Files (County Court Clerk), 1924-1941  
Location: County Clerk's Office  
Microfilm: 1924-1941--at TSL&A, County Clerk



130. Record: Receivable Warrants (County Judge), 1954-1955  
Location: County Archives

These are stubs of duplicates of money receipts for funds received by the county showing the date, the warrant number, the amount of money received, by whom it was received and to whom it was distributed, and the name of the Judge. The record is not indexed.

131. Record: Warrant Register (County Judge), 1915-1939  
Location: County Archives

This is a record of warrants registered for general county expenditures showing the name of the claimant, the date and number of the warrant, and then categories of specific disbursements. These include items such as the justice of the peace's per diem, circuit court bills of cost for jail accounts, interest, and county farm expenditures, election commission costs, expenses keeping vital statistics, miscellaneous purposes, and then a column for total amounts. This record is not indexed.

132. Record: Receipt Book (County Trustee), 1891  
Location: County Archives

The volume contains duplicate receipts for revenue collected, and





it contains the name of the payee, the date money was received, the amount and purpose of the payment, the account to which it was credited, and the signature of the clerk. receipts include moneys collected through various taxes and funding programs, and this is indicated in the record. The volume is not indexed.

133. Record: Cash Journal (County Trustee), 1920-1954  
Location: County Archives

A record of receipts and disbursements including the date of the transaction, the amount and source of money or purpose of the payment, the amount of debit or credit, the account to which the money is credited or charged. The record shows the purpose of the disbursement including payments to state and county officials and agencies, payments for schools, roads, health agencies, libraries, the milk plant, and others. The record is not indexed.

134. Record: School Fund Book (County Trustee), 1870-1895,  
1923-1924  
Location: County Archives  
Microfilm: 1870-1895--at TSL&A, County Trustee

These are Trustee's receipts and a record of disbursements of school funds showing the date, the amount paid or disbursed, and the source of the money collected, the warrant number, the amount



and purpose of the disbursement. The record is not indexed.

135. Record: Account Book (Department of Education),  
1927-1929  
Location: County Archives

The book records the nature and amount of supplies provided from the central school office to schools in district 16, and it contains some school census information. It is not indexed.

136. Record: Notebook (Department of Education), 1913  
Location: County Archives

The notebook contains statistics on the number of white and black, male and female students in county schools representing an informal school census showing changes in school population from 1912 to 1913.

137. Record: School Board Minutes (Department of Education),  
1929-present  
Location: ?  
Microfilm: 1929-present--at TSL&A, ?

138. . Record: School Superintendent's Correspondence  
(Department of Education), 1945-1947  
Location: ?  
Microfilm: 1945-1947--at TSL&A, ?



139. Record: Note-Books (Register of Deeds), 1931-present  
Location: Register's Office

This is the receiving book for all instruments (deeds, bonds, etc.) arriving at the Register's office. It shows the name of the grantor and the grantee, the date, and where the original record went (to whom it was delivered). The record is not indexed.



## Foreword

The following article, "Jerry Sneak", from the play, "The Mayor of Garrat", was written by Homer Pittard in 1955. It is a dramatic account of a presentation given by James K. Polk while he was a student at Bradley Academy.

The article also contains information about Samuel Black, Headmaster of Bradley Academy at the time that Polk was enrolled there as a student. There are also references to Dr. Robert Henderson, a friend of the Polk family and a member of the Bradley Academy faculty. It is thought that Dr. Henderson who came over from Columbia, Tennessee to teach at the Academy may have influenced James Polk to come there as a student.

The article is included in this publication with the permission of Mabel Pittard, wife of the former Dr. Homer Pittard who was a member of the Rutherford County Historical Society for many years.





### "Jerry Sneak"

There was the smell of autumn in the air. The stars were spilled out over the heavens like a great natural extravaganza serving as a colossal backdrop for the high-riding full moon. The one story log courthouse lay in the center of the darkened square and not a single light burned in the cluster of shops. The village itself lay in a virtual blanket of darkness. The only perceptible living thing was an old cow sloshing aimlessly across the commons and pausing in the ooze to drink from the puddles.

The village streets that fanned out from the square were deserted with a completeness that only a Goldsmith could have described. It was October 4, 1815. There were ominous rumblings in the far north. The British were laying waste the Capital City. Dolly Madison had ripped the portraits from the White House frames, snatched up the White House silver, and hied to parts unknown. But here in Murfreesborough, with the baffles of hundreds of miles; almost impassable roads. and only an occasional word from the outside world brought by a flatboat docking at nearby Jefferson, life was serene and war remote. Too, on this particular night Professor Black's closing exercises were being held at Bradley Academy. These occasions were rare ones, and the townspeople hurried through their chores and closed their shops early in order to be among those present at the Academy. It was said that the plaintive lowings of



of unfed and unmilked cows were indications as valid as any that it was examination night at the Academy. The people turned out enmasse.

Out Academy Street, south and beyond the brick Presbyterian Church, near the village limits, stood Bradley Academy. It was a spacious log building, and rays from the various oil lamps cut the night. Hitched to the side of the structure and to the nearby cedars were horses of every description and color. Some fine whites were standing for tasseled carriages, and they were wrapped in blankets against the cool October breezes. Others, singly, were without saddles, and the callouses on their bellies and hocks betrayed their acquaintance with the plow.

Inside, every rough-hewn bench was filled as was all available standing space on three sides of the room. The only island was a small, raised platform to the front. Pushed to the side was the teacher's high podium where reposed two scrubbed and starched young children.

In the audience near the front of the room were Professor Samuel P. Black, the venerable scholar and rector, and Dr. Robert Henderson who also taught at the Academy. Nearby sat Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Polk, parents of James K. Also, among those present were Mr. and Mrs. Joel Childress with Susan and Sarah, as well as Samuel Laughlin, a close friend of James K. Polk.



Prefatory to each scholar's appearance from behind the draperies to the side of the rostrum, Professor Black would rise and present a brief, dignified, and deferential summary of the student's activities and general progress. The student, his character and abilities having been oratorically embellished to the point of embarrassment, would then emerge from his protective niche behind the curtains. He would stride to the center of the stage to a prescribed spot marked by a charcoal "X" on the floor. After gaining some semblance of equilibrium, he would embark on his piece for the evening. It might be a confident Mark Anthony at the bier of a fallen Caesar or a bristling Horatius at the bridge. Whatever the choice, the classic would be brought to full flower.

Professor Black, with a flair for showmanship, always reserved the best for the last. On this occasion, October 4, 1814, as the time for the last examination came, the headmaster arose and made his introduction. It was an extended presentation and one that fully extolled the highest virtues of the prize pupil.

There was a stir in the audience as Jim Polk's name was called. A reproving glance from Mrs. Childress stifled the giggle from her oldest daughter. Then as Jim made his appearance there was a wave of laughter. Here was the characterization of Jerry Sneak from the play, "The Mayor of Garrat", a farce by old Samuel Foote. Jim Polk was in ragged, patched regalia,



with a dunce cap perched atop his head. Polk stepped near the front of the stage, rolled his eyes, and with a comical grimace, he began the lines to an imaginary shrewish mate:

"Yes, and you shan't think to hector and domineer over me as you have done; for I'll go to the club when I please, and stay out as late as I list, and row in a boat to Putney on Sunday, and visit my friends at Vitsontide, and keep the key to the till .....

From this Polk went on to other selections, accompanying his presentations with pantomime and gestures appropriate to each new character he addressed. That night Jerry Sneak came to life, and the ovation he received at the conclusion fully justified Professor Black's faith in him.

There was the usual round of congratulations, hand-clasping, and goodbyes. Bradley Academy had closed its session, and the spectators were filing out into the night. As Professor Black secured the windows and turned down the lights, he reflected on the past months. He was certain that that there were those who sat at his feet who were destined for greatness. Soon the village lights were burning again. The carriages were in their houses and the horses in their stables or barn lots. Soon the lights were turned low again, and Murfreesborough slept. An old cow leaned against the rough logs of the Courthouse and settled to the ground for the night. Just above her was the window of the town clerk's office.





The next morning James Polk with his father and mother visited Professor Black and before leaving received this letter of proficiency from the headmaster. It read:

"I hereby certify that James K. Polk has been a student under my direction for nine months preceding the date hereof, and that his proficiency in his studies and unexceptionable conduct entitles him to the attention and patronage of all lovers of literary merit or moral worth."

5 th October 1815

Sam P. Black  
Rector of Murfreesborough  
Academy

Several years later this letter found its way into the archives of the Tennessee Historical Society. Young Polk on the strength of this appraising transcript entered the sophomore class at the University of North Carolina and was graduated with honors three years later.

Why did James K. Polk come to Murfreesborough? Some have said that it was an affair of the heart since his future wife, Sarah Childress, was a resident of that village. This seems improbable for Sarah was only ten years of age at the time and Polk was seventeen. Their paths crossed only on occasion. Prof. Black did contract his tutorial services for the two Childress girls, Sarah and Susan. These sessions took place after the Academy hours were over. Mr. Childress, a well-to-do tavern keeper and merchant, was anxious that his children have more than the rudiments offered in the common school.



The best explanation seems to be that concerned with the person of Dr. Robert Henderson. Dr. Henderson was at the time of Polk's youth a prominent clergyman in Maury County. His services as a private tutor were engaged by Samuel Polk for his son James who was in poor health, recovering from a very serious gallstone operation. When Dr. Henderson came to Murfreesborough to found the First Presbyterian Church and to teach at Bradley Academy, young Polk soon followed. Henderson's History of Murfreesboro cites several instances of the Presbyterian leader's activities in the affairs of the County. At one place he is recorded as having made an impassioned speech before a committee delegated with the task of choosing a seat for Rutherford County. On another occasion he preached a funeral sermon at a public hanging. Also, he officiated at the wedding of James K. Polk and Sarah Childress. Doubtless, Dr. Henderson exerted a strong influence on Polk's early years, but it was Samuel P. Black whose inspiration and depth of scholarly attainment kindled the fires of ambition in the mind of the young scholar.

Samuel Pitts Black included not only James K. Polk among his successful students but also John Bell, Lunsford Yandell, Governor of Campbell of Virginia, and several other students who later became distinguished men. According to a manuscript entitled "Reminiscences" left to the late Dr. Samuel Wilson of Nashville by his father, Thomas B. Wilson, Professor Black was



born in Guilford County, North Carolina about 1758. The manuscript infers that Black fought in the Revolutionary War and was given a grant of land for his services. His descendants now living in Rutherford County aver that this grant was the basis of the vast acreage near Black's Cross-roads, now Walter Hill. It has been recorded that Black at the age of 19 opened a classical school near Abbingdon, Virginia. He held a professorship at the University of Georgia for a brief period and came to Nashville in 1798. There he taught at Cumberland College. Shortly thereafter, he went to Sumner County and established a school near the home of Colonel Elmore Douglas, on Station Camp Creek, and called it Montpelier Academy.

In 1805, according to the manuscript, he married Mrs. Fannie Sanders, a young widow who had one child, a son named Alexander who died in infancy. Fannie was the daughter of Lunsford Pitts of Dixon Springs, Tennessee. Soon after his marriage, Black went into merchandizing, building flat boats, and shipping produce to New Orleans. Failing in this venture, Black moved to Rutherford County in 1810. Shortly afterwards, Bradley Academy was opened and Professor Black was to be at its helm for 27 years.

Information concerning courses of study, faculty members. and rosters of students is fragmentary. The Nashville Whig



of October 25, 1814 carried a very interesting notice of the opening session of the Academy. It read:

"Murfreesborough Academy will commence next April 1, 1815 near Murfreesborough under the direction of Mr. Samuel Black. Subjects to be taught are: English Grammar, the Latin and Greek languages, Arithmetic, the most useful branches of mathematics. Belles-letters, Logic, and such other useful and ornamental branches of Literature. Students may board either in or out of town with genteel families at reasonable terms. Trustees pledge every care will be taken with morals. Trustees-- Edmond Jones, Frederick Barfield, William Lytle, Jonathan Estill, Joel Childress."

That Professor Black was an exceptional schoolmaster is attested to by many of the present-day residents of Rutherford County. Confirmations, untinctured by time, have come down through the years to these residents. Several years ago, Mrs. John Woodfin, a great-great-granddaughter of Professor Black received as a gift a massive cherry press, purported to have been the property of Samuel Black. In it were found several of his books. Included were: Johnson's The Rambler, Dr. Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric, Beatlie's Elements of Moral Science, Plutarch's Lives, Comstock's Chemistry, Works of John Bunyan, and Dotta's History of the War of the Independence.

Professor Black died in 1838. His remains lie in the Black Cemetery on the Lebanon Road near the Veteran's Hospital. The cemetery is now abandoned and overgrown with trees and underbrush. Two box-like tombs cover the final resting place of his ashes and those of his consort, Fannie.





On a clear day when the sun is high in the heavens, one can climb the iron picket fence, stand atop the weathered marble, and see the Courthouse in the distance. Over beyond just a ways, at a log schoolhouse one hundred and forty years ago this October (1955), Jerry Sneak received the blessings of Professor Black and went on to fame and renown.



## INDEX

## A

Accounts and Budgets.....	7
Account Book (Dept. of Education.....)	87
Administrators and Execu- tors Minute Books...	49
Administrators Bonds.....	44
Administrative Infor- mation.....	78-83
County Board of Health Minutes....	78
Index to County Court Clerk.....	79
Index to Quarterly Meetings.....	80
Receipts for Papers....	78
Administrative Rule Docket.....	46
Administrators Settle- ments.....	49
Affidavit Releases....	36
Audit Report (Co. Court Clerk).....	83

## B

Bell, John.....	85
Beverage Bonds.....	59
Birth Records.. . . .	13
Black, Samuel.....	89- 98
Bradley Academy.....	89- 98
Building Inspector.....	7
Business and Professional Information....	55-60

## C

Cash Journal (Co. Court Clerk).....	82
Cash Journal (Trustee) ..	86
Chancery Court.....	60-65
Appearance Docket..	60
Cash Book.....	65
Cash Journal.....	65
Distribution Docket	64
Enrollment.....	60
Execution Docket..	64
Exhibits.....	62
Judgement Index....	63
Minutes.....	62
Rule Docket....	61

Charters.....	57
Chattel Mortgages.....	34
Childress, Joel.....	91, 94, 95
Childress, Sarah.....	91, 94, 95
Church List.....	33
Circuit Court.....	66-72
Appearance Docket....	66
Cash Journal.....	71
Civil or Criminal Minutes.....	68
Enrollment Book.....	66
Execution Docket.....	71
General Index.....	67
Grand Jury Docket.....	71
Grand Jury Notes.. . .	72
Jury Book.....	69
Jury List.....	69
Judgement Book.....	70
Rule Docket.....	67
Trial Docket... . . .	67
Witness Book.....	69
City Directories.. . . .	28
Claims against estates....	46
Clerk and Master.. . . .	8
Constables.. . . .	8
Contractor Licenses....	58
County Archives.....	11
County Attorney.. . . .	8
County Clerk.....	7
County Executive.. . . .	7
County Trustee....	8
County Judge and County Court.. . . .	72-- 76
Cash Journal.....	75
Enrollment Docket.....	73
Execution Docket.. . . .	74
Jury Claims.....	74
Juvenile Court Records..	72
Rule Docket.....	74
Trial Docket.. . . .	76
Trial Sessions.....	75
County Legislature.....	6
County Trustee.....	8
Coroner.....	7
Court of General Sessions.....	8



## D

Daily Cash Record.....	82
Death Records.....	13
Deeds.....	23-- 29
Delinquent Taxes.....	39
Dentists Registers.....	58
Developers-Subdividers	
Index.....	37
Discharges(Military).....	14
District Attorney.....	8

## E

Enumeration.....	15
Estates.....	41-- 50
Estate Books.....	48
Estate Sales.....	47
Estate Settlements.....	48
Executors Bonds.....	44

## F

First Presbyterian	
Church.....	95
Foot, Samuel.....	92
Fox scalp exemptions.....	15

## G

Guardian Bonds.....	17
Guardian Minute Book.....	17
Guardian's Receipts.....	18
Guardian Settlements.....	16

## H

Henderson, Dr. Robert..	89-95
Highway Dept. ....	7

## I

Index to Files(County	
Court Clerk.....	84
Index to Minute Book.....	79
Index to Sales Record....	82
Index to Quarterly	
Meetings... ..	80
Inheritance Record.....	49
Insolvent Estates.....	45
Interpretating the	
Information.....	29

## J

Jerry Sneak.....	89--98
Juvenile Court.....	8
Justice of Peace.....	6

## L

Land sold for taxes....	41
Laughlin, Samuel.....	91
Legal Information..	60--78
License expiration...	56
Lien Book.....	35
Liens.....	33
Linebaugh Library..	83--89

## M

Magistrates Bonds and	
Oaths.....	80
Marriage Licenses....	19
Marriages.....	18
Merchant's Bonds.....	56
Merchant's Licenses...	50
Minute Books.....	74
Minutes of Co. Board	
of Health.....	73
Mortgages.....	34
Motor Vehicles....	19

## N

Naturalization.....	19
Notary Public Bonds....	80
Note Books (Register	
of Deeds).....	88
Note Book (Dept. of	
Education.....	87
Notes of Completion.....	38

## P

Parish form of govern-	
ment.....	19
Partnership agreements..	57
Personal Information..	13-23
Physicians Register....	58
Polk, James K. ...	89-- 95
Polk, Samuel.....	91
Privilege Licenses.....	54
Probate Deed Book.....	35
Probate Docket.....	47
Property Information..	10-23
Power of Attorney....	20-21



## Q

Quarterly Court.....	7
Quarterly Minute Books....	80

## R

Rangers.....	7
Receipt Book (Co. Trustee)	85
Receivable Warrants.....	85
Record Book of Wills.....	41
Recording Information..	9--13
Register.....	7
Register-at-large.....	7
Registered Voters.....	21
Release Books.....	36
Restrictions.....	37
Revenue Docket.....	81
Road Appointment Book....	83
Road Bond Book.....	83
Road Orders.....	83

## S

Sale Book(Chancery Court)	40
Sale Book(Circuit Court)	40
Sanders, Fannie.....	96
San Fire Insurance Co.	
Atlases.....	28
School Board Minutes.....	87
School Fund Book.....	86
School Superintendent's	
Correspondence.....	87
Sheriff.....	7
Shire-reeve.....	5
Structure of local govern-	
ment.....	4--9

## T

Tax Assessor.....	8
Tax Books.....	38
Taxes.....	38--41
Tennessee State Library	
Archives.....	4
Trust Deeds.....	35

## U

Unified Commercial Code	
Filing Notebook.....	..34

## W

Warrant Register....	81, 85
Will Books.....	41
Wills.....	41
Wilson, Dr. Samuel.....	95
Wilson, Thomas.....	95
Woodfin, Mrs. John.....	92

## Y

Yandell, Lunsford.....	95
------------------------	----

# DATE DUE

	MAR		
AP 05 '95	AUG 14 2005		
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